

## Patience and Work Engagement among Islamic Bank Employees

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### Abstract / Abstrak

This research investigates Islamic bank employees' work engagement and its correlation to patience. Work engagement is fulfilling and positive state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Patience is a coping strategy which involves rational thinking, self-acceptance, self-control, and effort. By using accidental sampling, final participants were 169 employees working in Islamic bank who were varied in age, job position, employment status, tenure, educational background, and work location. Data was gathered by using two measures that is the utrecht work engagement scale and patience scale and it were analyzed using Pearson correlation. Patience is found to relate positively with work engagement. Islamic bank management may conduct training about patience to enhance their employees' engagement.

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### Keywords / Kata kunci

Patience;  
Work engagement;  
Islamic bank employees

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*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan kesabaran dan keterikatan kerja pada pegawai bank Islam. Keterikatan kerja adalah keadaan pikiran yang memuaskan dan positif yang dicirikan oleh vigor, dedication, dan absorption. Kesabaran adalah salah satu strategi respon terhadap masalah yang mencakup berpikir rasional, penerimaan diri, kontrol diri, dan berusaha. Dengan menggunakan accidental sampling, partisipan yang didapat terdiri dari 169 karyawan di bank berbasis Islam yang bervariasi dalam hal usia, posisi pekerjaan, status kepegawaian, masa kerja, dan latar belakang pendidikan. Data diambil dengan menggunakan dua alat ukur yaitu utrecht work engagement scale dan skala kesabaran. Data diolah dengan Pearson correlation.. Kesabaran berhubungan positif dengan keterikatan kerja. Manajemen bank Islam dapat mengadakan pelatihan tentang kesabaran untuk meningkatkan keterikatan kerja karyawannya.*

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*Kesabaran;  
Keterikatan kerja;  
Pegawai bank Islam*

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### Introduction

Employee well-being is getting popular nowadays due to its relationship with job performance (Ilies et al., 2015). Peterson et al. (2005) differentiated three different relative positions to subjective well-being, they are: engagement, meaning, and pleasure. As ways of achieving subjective well-being, engagement and meaning are under the direct control of the person and give higher results in subjective well-being level. Work engagement is an essential topic to be discussed when studying subjective well-being at work (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). Work engagement now become important antecedent of subjective well-being at work (Ilies et al., 2015). Peterson et al. (2005) added that engaging in life activities including work activity will result in fulfillment and will

contribute to one's subjective well-being enhancement.

Work engagement can further improve the quality of organization competitiveness, an important aspect that is much needed in today's economic challenges (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015). Moreover, work engagement also creates added value beyond workplace since it has the potential to enrich employee's other major life areas (Eldor, 2016). Therefore, current research about work engagement and its antecedents are getting more popular (Bailey et al., 2017).

Work engagement consists of three dimensions they are vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Vigor refers to mental toughness and strong effort to struggle while working. Dedication is a sense of involvement, meaningfulness, enthusiasm, and pride to support one's effort in facing challenge

at work. Absorption is related to full concentration as an effect of an employee's happy feeling.

Engaged employees are capital for modern organizations. Organizations may facilitate their employees' work engagement by utilizing two types of approaches they are top-down and bottom-up (Bakker, 2017). Top-down approaches include strategic human resources practices and also transformational leadership interventions. Bottom-up approaches to work engagement include personal proactive strategies such as job crafting, self management, strengths use, and mobilizing ego resources. Organizations can decide which approach is best for them to optimize the work environment and to increase personal resources.

Researchers are interested to focus on strengths use as bottom-up approach. Employees should be encouraged by organizations to use their strengths because when employees emphasize on their strengths, they may flourish and be more authentic (Bakker & van Woerkom, 2018). Employees can be more energetic to reach their goals when they utilize their strengths during work activities (Bakker, 2017). The use of character strengths in workplace increases job satisfaction as well as productive work behaviors (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017). Congruent use between strengths and work situation is imperative for promoting job satisfaction, engagement, pleasure, and meaning in one's job (Harzer & Ruch, 2013).

In Positive Psychology literature, psychologists who have strong interest in exploring good character proposed the character strengths model (Peterson & Park, 2006). Virtues are the fundamental building block of good character. Virtue psychology is enriching the psychology literature in conjunction with psychology of emotion, moral philosophy, personality psychology, and the psychology of religion (Schnitker et al., 2017). Habituated practices of virtues such as courage, humility, justice, fairness, and patience builds the moral character of individual (Sison & Ferrero, 2015).

By using Christian perspective, Schnitker et al. (2017) argued that thinking carefully about people's religious meaning-systems to comprehend the virtue of patience is essential. In the previous psychological literature, patience has been defined as "the propensity of a person to wait calmly in the face of frustration, adversity, or suffering" (Schnitker, 2012). Despite the growing literature of patience in Christian theology, Islam also has broad explanation about the concept of patience. Patience is one of the most important moral virtues that is emphasizing in religious texts and holds an important role in one's spiritual perfection (Samaneh, 2015).

Individuals with high level of patience could control themselves especially under unstable situation (Alan & Ertac, 2015) because patience relates to reliance on God (Bonab & Koohsar, 2011). In a work setting, employees who could deliver patience, would most likely to overcome any hard challenges. Patience is described in the Quran Surah Hud verse 11 and also part of Islamic work ethic (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014). A muslim employee must realize that being patient would lead to ease in achieving work target.

Subandi (2011) explained about aspects of patience. Patience consists of five aspects they are self control, resilience, persistence, acceptance, and ability to stay calm. Self control is the ability to control emotions, desires, thinking, forgive mistakes, and tolerate delays. Resilience is the ability to survive in adversity without complaining. Persistence is ability to work hard, achieve goals, and resolve problems. Acceptance is ability to accept with sincerity and gratitude. Finally, being able to stay calm could control us not to hurry.

The concept of patience in Quran has various meaning depend on the object, matter, or problem faced by individual. Some of the interpretation of patience are patient when facing disaster, patient in controlling self regarding wealth, patient in dealing with war, patient in controlling anger, patient in hiding secret, patient in luxury, and patient in any limitation.

Above meaning-making of patience is similar to some concepts in western psychology such as self control, resilience, perseverance, and acceptance (Yusuf et al., 2018).

Patience used in this research is based on Ramdani et al. (2018) finding that patience consists of rational thinking, self acceptance, self control, and effort. Rational thinking is an effort to think positive even in any hardest trouble as well as to be careful before taking action. Self acceptance is willingness to accept any positive or negative life event to then be able to give feedback to ourselves. Self control is emotional balance to create composure. Effort is showing more extra effort without losing hope in order to look for best solution.

The researchers tried to explain the framework of the relationship between patience and work engagement by using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory that has been broadly applied in many studies regarding motivation-related processes related to work engagement (Gorgievski et al., 2011). Referring to COR theory, individuals always to guard, preserve, and collecting resources. Entities that are considered to be important because of their own ability (e.g., personal accomplishment in work, health, job satisfaction), or act as methods to gain beneficial goals (e.g., social support, self efficacy, physical energy, autonomy) can be named as resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Patience can be included as one of the resources.

Built on COR theory, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) proposed that personal and job resources could stimulate work engagement provided by motivational process (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Job resources are psychological, physical, organizational, or social conditions of the job that advance the successful achievement of work goals, reduce demands in job, and raise personal development. Personal resources are aspects of one's self that are associated with toughness and affect his or her ability to control their surroundings successfully (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Patience can be included as personal resource, hence it is assumed to have positive correlation with work engagement.

Islamic bank was chosen as research setting in order to examine the relationship between those two variables. As many other organizations, work engagement among Islamic bank employees is vital to support the growth of the company. Thus, the proper human management system will lead to engaged human capital.

There is strong empirical evidence that Islamic bank development in muslim countries contributes to a higher development of banking sector, as can be measured by the total number of gross domestic product (GDP) (Gheeraert, 2014). As a country with the biggest muslim population, Indonesia should have a satisfying growth of Islamic banks. However, Islamic bank development in Indonesia was slower than other muslim majority countries due to detainment in the establishment of those banks. By the end of 2015, the condition of Indonesian Islamic bank market share was 5% lower than the target set by the National Bank of Indonesia (Sari et al., 2016). In fact, Islamic banks are generally more liquid than conventional ones. This condition is supported by no significant difference in financial accomplishment between Islamic and conventional banks, except in its liquidity (Ika & Abdullah, 2011).

Ismal (2011) found that specific challenges to be solved in Islamic bank management are lack of product development, lack of human resources, and small market share. Moreover, by applying the analytic network process method, Rusydiana (2016) tried to explain the challenges happening among Islamic banking organizations in Indonesia. The findings showed that there are four important aspects that need to be solved, namely: (1) Islamic banks capital is still not enough, (2) lack of mastery of Islamic bank practitioners, (3) insufficient contribution from government, and (4) low trust and public interest to Islamic banks.

Rusydiana (2016) then proposed some strategies to resolve those problems, they are: (1) build up the capital scale and increase the level of efficiency, (2) upgrade the human capital both in quantity and quality, and also information

technologies, and (3) improve the supervision and regulation of Islamic bank funds.

Researcher did not get exact fact mentioning that work engagement level among Islamic bank employees is unfavorable. However, examining work engagement would be beneficial since it is related to the quality of human capital. Work engagement is one of the main factors that determine the success of a company (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015).

Finally, based on above argumentation, the researchers stated research problem: is there any correlation between patience and work engagement. Hence, we proposed a hypothesis that patience correlate with work engagement among Islamic bank employees.

### Methods

This study is categorized into non-experimental and quantitative research. In this study, participants were male and female employees working in various Islamic banks in some cities across Indonesia for minimum 1 year tenure. Researcher did not have precise numbers of study population, so questionnaires were distributed online by using accidental sampling. Shopping vouchers were randomly granted to some lucky participants as reward. After evaluating quality of completed questionnaires, final participants were 169 people.

In this study, patience act as independent variable and work engagement as dependent variable. This study utilized two self-report scales to collect data, they are Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and patience scale. UWES was adapted to Bahasa Indonesia from its English origin, whereas patience scale was originally in Bahasa Indonesia. Participants were asked to give respond to scales given. Both instruments used Likert scale with six different answer options ranging from almost never (1) to always (6).

UWES was originally developed by Schaufeli et al. (2003). There are some versions of this scale regarding its number of items. Researchers decided to use the ultra-short version with only three items, each item

represent one aspect of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Schaufeli et al. (2017) concluded that the UWES with 3 items is a valid and reliable tool to measure work engagement that can be used as an option as reliable as another longer versions. This 3-item scale was translated and also back-translated by two different bilingual organizational psychologist. The three items are: (1) "At my work, I feel bursting with energy" (*Dalam bekerja, saya merasa penuh energi*), (2) "I am enthusiastic about my job" (*Saya merasa antusias dalam bekerja*), and (3) "I am immersed in my work" (*Saya merasa terlibat penuh dalam bekerja*).

Patience scale was originally developed by Ramdani et al. (2018). This scale was chosen because it has a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = .900$ . This tool consists of 19 items. Examples of items are: (1) "I always act carefully", (2) "I finish tasks calmly", and (3) "I feel grateful of what God has given me in life".

Researcher conducted professional judgement to examine scales' content. Next, Alpha-Cronbach formulation was used to count the reliability of the instrument on a pilot study involving 48 participants. The final UWES has a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = .961$ . Meanwhile, the final patience scale has a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = .980$ . We also conducted validity examination by looking at the corrected-item total correlation score. Items in UWES are ranging from .916 to .978. Meanwhile, items in patience scale are ranging from .312 to .959. Zero items had to be dropped from UWES whereas 1 item had to be dropped from patience scale. Data was then to be analyzed by using the technique of Pearson correlation.

### Results

Based on demographic data in table 1, the sample of 169 employees working in Islamic bank consists of 53% female and 47% male who were mostly 29-32 years old (50 %). Moreover, majority of respondents were staff (80%), permanent (63%), have worked for 4-6 years (56%), and hold bachelor degree (63%).

Table 1

*Demographic Data*

Variable	%
Age	
25 – 28	33
29 – 32	50
33 – 36	17
Gender	
Male	47
Female	53
Job level	
Staff	80
Supervisor	13
Manager	7
Employment Status	
Permanent	63
Contract	37
Tenure	
1-3 years	42
4-6 years	56
7-9 years	2
Educational degree	
Diploma	28
Bachelor	63
Master	9

Participants' score in patience and work engagement can be understood in table 2. This table explains the distribution level of work engagement and patience. Next, table 3 presents the score categorization used in work engagement and patience. These norms of categorization were established based on the assumption that scores of the subjects were in normal distribution. Scores were divided into three categories.

Researcher also executed normality testing to examine normal distribution within each variable by using skewness and kurtosis, Kolmogorov Smirnov, and P-Plot examination. Table 4 presents skewness and kurtosis examination resulting normal distribution from two variables.

Table 5 presents Kolmogorov Smirnov testing result. Based on their significance score, both variables are in normal distribution. After confirming that data is normal, hypothesis testing was executed. Pearson correlation analysis showed that patience correlates positively to work engagement.

Table 2

*Participants' scores*

	Xmax	Xmin	Mean	SD
Work engagement	18	6	12.64	3.23
Patience	114	45	92.39	18.03

Table 3

*Categorization's scores*

Category	Total	%
Work engagement		
High	76	40.6
Moderate	48	30.2
Low	45	29.1
Patience		
High	85	43.5
Moderate	57	32.7
Low	27	23.7

Hypothesis testing result shows correlation coefficient number of  $r_{xy} = .603$  with significance  $p = .000$  ( $p < .05$ ). Positive mark in correlation coefficient shows that the higher one's patience level then his or her work engagement could increase. Therefore, hypothesis is accepted. This research did not control the effect of other variables statistically. Those variables may be age, job level, employment status, tenure, and educational degree.

Table 4

*Skewness and Kurtosis Testing*

Variable	
Work engagement	
Skewness	.17
Kurtosis	4.67
Result	Normal
Patience	
Skewness	-.52
Kurtosis	1.40
Result	Normal

Table 5

*Kolmogorov Smirnov Testing*

Variable	
Work engagement	
Sig.	.120
Result	Normal
Patience	
Sig.	.082
Result	Normal

Note: sig > .05 = normal

## Discussion

It is hypothesized that patience would correlate positively to work engagement. Result shows that the hypothesis is accepted. The finding prove that patience contribute positively to work engagement. We can see that the correlation between patience and work engagement is strong by looking at the correlation coefficient number ( $r_{xy} = .603$ ). The following argumentation would like to address the importance of having patience in order to gain work engagement to support our finding.

Work engagement usually described as fulfilling and positive work-related state of mind which consists of vigor, dedication and absorption (Bakker, 2017). Vigor can be defined as high energy and mental toughness during work, a preparedness to show attainment and persistence even in struggling situations. Dedication is a feeling of being significant in work, as well as feeling inspired, enthusiastic, and proud. Absorption means delivering full attentiveness whilst working. From the definition of each dimension, we can see that being engaged at work requires positive affective state of mind. Highly-engaged employees manifest higher personal achievement and psychological well-being, whereas those with low engagement demonstrate higher depersonalization and emotionally exhausted (Shuck & Reio Jr., 2014).

Encouraging employee's engagement has been discussed as a popular subject in latest years, especially in muslim countries. It may be caused by several unfavorable factors for example dissatisfaction, work stress, aggravation, or nervousness. Those factors are in contrary with work engagement. In order to gain positive affective state of mind, Zahrah et al. (2015) suggested every muslim to be patient, tolerant, resilient, deliver good control of self, tawakkal (blind trust in Allah), and put a full faith to Allah's will. This study is focus on one of those mentioned strategies that is patience.

The importance of patience is even mentioned in the Holy Quran, as quoted in Surah Al-'Asr which means: "By time; Indeed,

mankind is in loss; Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to the truth and advised each other to patience". As good muslims, we have to be patient as fundamental of faith in God. This principle also supports muslims to have better engagement with their work while realizing their limitations (Achour et al., 2015).

In order to cope with life stressors, muslims often use various religious strategies (Achour et al., 2015). Some of those strategies are unconditional faith in God, belief, prayer, religiosity, reading and comprehending the Quran, gratefulness, and also patience. In order to survive from any suffering (including work problems), to pass divine trials, to overcome illness, one should be tolerated with patience. When we could show patience, then we would be more intensive on relying ourselves to God. Patience and faith in God when facing any hardship are believed to transform distress to blessing (Watt in Joshanloo, 2013). The role of patience is verified in the relationships between attachment to God and psychological vulnerability (Leilan et al., 2015).

Worthen (2018) found patience as an underpinning aspect for psychological health, wellbeing, and spiritual maturity. Living a better life could be led by strengthening religious belief accompanied by patience (Marhemati & Khormaei, 2017). This study would like to promote the importance of patience in work area as more specific life domain. Work domain is essential in people's life because it provides broad possibilities for satisfying individuals' fulfillment and for realizing purposeful and meaningful life. Patience as one of Islamic work values (Wahab et al., 2016) is a significant predictor of employee subjective wellbeing (Wahab, 2017). In his qualitative study, Turmenoglu (2018) found that managers in the food sector act against multiple challenges by being patient.

Patience means the ability of self control and resilient during facing obstacles or any burden (Shihab, 2000). The construct of patience is one of virtues that come from Islamic teaching

(El-Hafiz et al., 2013). There is a slight transition about the meaning of patience as interpreted by *tafsir* analysis to be compared with society's understanding (El-Hafiz et al., 2015). Patience is defined as an active respond in controlling emotion, thought, saying, and behavior accompanied by optimism, resilience, information-seeking, solution-seeking, consistency, and also perseverance. Moreover, Eich (2016) explains that workers in managerial position should possess patience since it is a leadership virtue. He describes eight critical elements of patience they are purpose, approachability, tolerance, independence, empathy, nurturance, confidence, and endurance.

If we look closer at above comprehension about patience, we can see that resilience is one of the element in patience. There is a key message that employee resilience can be considered as instrument to foster work engagement (Cooke et al., 2019). Resilient people are more engaged at work than their less resilient coworkers (Kašpárková et al., 2018). Employee resilience partially mediate the effect of learning organization on work engagement (Malik & Garg, 2017). As psychological capital, resilience together with optimism, self-efficacy, and hope boost work engagement which eventually to enhance job, career, and life satisfaction (Karatepe & Karadas, 2015).

Based on above findings, the researchers explain how patience can correlate with work engagement. To the researchers' knowledge, studies examining patience and work outcome specifically work engagement is still scarce. The researchers found two studies (Bülbül & İzgar, 2018; Bülbül & Arslan, 2017) explaining the role of patience not in organizational setting but in educational setting. Therefore, this study is an initial effort to promote that patience can enhance work engagement.

There were several limitations encountered during research process. First, the number of the final sample in this study is very small ( $n=169$ ) in contrast to the total Islamic bank employees in Indonesia. Participants' type of companies are

also heterogeneous from different companies. These may lead to lesser accuracy in result generalization. Based on this research, this result can only be generalized among the sample. Second, cross-sectional and self-administered nature of this study is still potential to bias. The results may be influenced by common-method variance. Despite above limitations, result of this study contributes important implications for both the development of human capital management in Islamic banks as well as the growing literature of Islamic Psychology.

### Conclusion

Based on above analysis, the researchers concluded that patience has positive correlation with work engagement among Islamic bank employees. The more patient an employee, he or she would be more engaged at work.

For practical suggestion, Islamic bank management may conduct such a tailored training for employees. The training program could be induced by four aspects of patience as measured in this research, they are self acceptance, rational thinking, effort, and self control.

For next researcher, consideration of result generalization must be compromised well. Next research could take place in one company only or gathering data from several company but using probability sampling technique. Moreover, collecting data by using any other method besides cross-sectional one. Gathering longitudinal data may be beneficial in organizational studies (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

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